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ABSTRACT

Four cooperating Midwest colleges--St. John's University, St. Olaf College, the College of St. Catherine in Minnesota and Luther College in Iowa--have undertaken among themselves a revitalization of the humanistic tradition according to its Christian dimension. This report describes their efforts. Similarities in the histories, goals, and activities of the institutions are described, and it is noted that these similarities have existed despite their separate characteristics as Catholic and Lutheran institutions. Challenges to humanism and the Christian tradition at the four colleges are outlined. Common trends are seen in enrollment factors (i.e., declining enrollment in church-related colleges), the tightening job market that threatens the liberal arts tradition, changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council, the Vietnam War, the disruption of Watergate, declining faculty loyalty to the church-related colleges, changes in the churches, and curricular pluralism. Specific challenges that appear to belong to these trends and that affect the four colleges are discussed for each college. (MSE)

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HUMANISM AND THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION:

THE EXPERIENCE OF FOUR UPPER MIDWEST CHURCH COLLEGES

Introduction

This section offers a description of the four cooperating colleges as bearers of the humanistic tradition according to its Christian dimension and a statement of the present situation at these institutions which indicates the need for revitalizing this tradition at the present time.

In characterizing the four colleges as centers of what is sometimes called "Christian Humanism," we will discuss first the features common to all four and then describe the particular contribution of each school. Likewise, in stating the challenges to "Christian Humanism" which the colleges are facing today, we will note certain common trends first, then specify the concrete developments at each college which reveal that the Christian appreciation of humanism is in urgent need of restatement and renewal.

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I. Humanism and the Christian Tradition at St. John's University, Luther College, St. Olaf College, and the College of St. Catherine

A. Common Characteristics

It is both natural and satisfying that at this moment in history one can begin a sketch of the above four colleges on the note of common features, realizing that not too long ago the designations "Roman Catholic" and "Lutheran" would have drawn first attention. No forced ecumenical motive is at work in starting with what is true of all four colleges; the respective histories of the schools show them to be similar on several counts.

1. Heirs of strong Christian and humanist tradition. In the case of the Order of St. Benedict, whose nineteenth century members founded St. John's University, one may cite these words from a tribute paid the Order by Pope Pius XII:

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The sons of Benedict were almost alone in that dark age of profound ignorance and turmoil, in preserving the codices of literature and learning, in translating them most faithfully and commenting on them; they were also among the pioneers in practicing and promoting the arts, science and teaching. . . .¹

A striking contemporary example of the Benedictine devotion to literature, learning, and translating is the collection at Saint John's of micro-film reproductions of monastic manuscripts from European monasteries and libraries, an extraordinary project which was begun at Monte Cassino, the home of the Benedictines, in 1965.² More significant in the long run, however, has been Saint John's steady commitment to the liberal arts curriculum, illustrated by the fact that until fairly recently, over half of a student's program was made up of designated courses in English, History, Science, Philosophy, Theology, and Foreign Languages. According to the Saint John's view that Christian faith and higher learning can be integrated, the 1934 College Catalog states:

It is a strong Christian tradition that the mastery of the liberal arts and sciences be united into a firm synthesis. This synthesis is achieved through the study of philosophy, which furnishes the principles and grounds of all human knowledge as well as the ultimate principles of being and life.³

Saint John's University was founded in 1857 and is thus the oldest of the four cooperating colleges. The next in order of age is Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, founded in 1861 by Norwegian immigrant pastors, themselves trained at the Royal Frederick University in Christiania (now Oslo), Norway, who soon discovered that it was up to them to train pastors and parochial school teachers for their fellow immigrants; they made appeals to the Church in Norway for additional clergy but the response was not commensurate with the growing needs in the New World. So Luther College was founded, not as a theological seminary as such, but as a school of classical training patterned after the continental Latin school whose graduates were expected, at least in the early years, to proceed directly to theological seminary.

Not unlike the situation at Saint John's in Collegeville, where the presence of a monastery increased rather than diminished the academic life of the community, Luther College never allowed the needs of the Church for pastors and teachers to dilute the institution's original investment in sound, classical learning. In 1890, when some of Luther's constituents suggested that a seminary should be located in Decorah in connection with Luther College, one of its graduates and a leader in the Norwegian Lutheran Church spoke out against such a move: "A college must as a matter of course have a broader basis and a more cosmopolitan character," he said. "Luther College must be a college proper." As such, he continued, it "will have an even larger field of work and exert an even deeper and more widespread influence" than if it were to shape its character into that of a theological preparatory school.⁴

While other American liberal arts colleges were hastening to adopt the elective system, Luther was reluctant to join the trend. When the objectives and curriculum of the College were under discussion in 1918, someone pointed out as one-sided, even for future ministers, that nearly 60 per cent of the credits required for graduation were in language and literature.⁵ Yet the classical curriculum with requirements in Latin and Greek was not significantly changed until 1931.⁶

The particular style of Lutheranism advocated by the leaders at Luther College was a blend of orthodoxy, hewing to the line of conservative doctrinal views inherited from Norway and Germany, and pietism, that is, the translation of biblical and Lutheran teaching into personal commitments to lives of moral integrity and loving service. In the light of what will be said later, it may be noted here that the style of religiosity cultivated at Luther College was always strong on the "objective" side of things; what mattered most was what the Scriptures actually said and what the Lutheran confessional

writings clearly stated. Behind this attitude lay a profound appreciation of the givenness of the central redemptive action of God, the sending of Jesus as the Christ into the world to live, suffer, die, and be raised again for the deliverance of mankind from sin, evil, and death.

This religious objectivity had its corollary in educational philosophy. The humanistic enterprise was best advanced, said the leaders at Luther College, by offering students courses of depth and substance which would challenge young minds to grapple with issues larger than their own experiences. Not surprisingly, the College has required students to take substantial work in religious studies; until the early 1960s fourteen semester hours of Bible and Religion were mandatory. More recently the requirement has been reduced to eight hours.

Much of what has been written above about Luther College applies also to its sister institution, St. Olaf College, founded in 1874 by Norwegian Lutheran immigrants. That two such similar institutions should be in existence today, located in small Midwestern towns only a bit more than a two hour's drive apart, testifies not only to an intricate history of theological disagreements and no small measure of Norwegian stubbornness, but also to the strength of the immigrants' belief in higher education. The same Christian and humanistic interests at work in the establishing of Luther College were active when "St. Olaf's School" was founded in Northfield, Minnesota thirteen years later. Clear evidence for the similarity is in the fact that St. Olaf's first two presidents and over one-third of its faculty up to 1900 were Luther graduates.⁷

A significant difference between these two Lutheran colleges was made visible at the very beginning of St. Olaf's history when official statements of the purpose of the school spoke of giving "youth of both sexes a higher education for the practical life" but said nothing of preparing young men for theological study.⁸ In contrast, the first president of Luther College, Laur.

Larsen, described that institution in an early announcement as the "Norwegian Lutheran School for the Education of Ministers."⁹ It may also be noted here that St. Olaf was the only one of the four colleges to begin as a co-educational school; Luther became co-educational in 1936.

The leading figure in the establishing of St. Olaf was the Reverend Bernt Julius Muus, an immigrant pastor whose university and theological training was essentially identical with that of the Norwegian clergymen who founded Luther College. Muus's choice for principal of the new school in Northfield was the Reverend Thorbjørn Nelson Mohn, Norwegian born but educated, it is important to observe, in the United States (Luther College, class of 1870; Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, class of 1873). These two leaders, Muus the first chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Mohn the first principal and later president, agreed that the Christian faith should permeate the school without making St. Olaf a "school of religion."¹⁰ The Christian faith was that "as taught by the Evangelical Lutheran Church" and the goal of this influence was not churchly indoctrination but service to mankind in the various walks of life.

When St. Olaf College observed its Centennial in 1974, it published a fresh statement of the self-understanding and aims of the College under the title, "Identity and Mission in a Changing Context." Written by faculty members, the document reviews some of the original statements of purpose early College sources found in ~~the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws~~ and presents the contemporary mode of understanding these statements:

It was their intention, they said, to establish a college "for the purpose of giving young men and women a higher education in harmony with the Christian faith." The instruction and life of the College should "aim to fit the student for active Christian service" and should cover "the subjects which are usually given in a standard Liberal Arts College." By the circumstances of its origin the identity of St. Olaf has been determined by the goals of higher education as such, by the distinctive aims of the liberal arts tradition, by the Christian faith as a context of learning, by a resolve to be of service to society, and by a commitment to co-education.¹¹

Between the founding in 1874 and the Centennial statement of "Identity and Mission" has been implementation of the purpose to educate young men and women in the liberal arts within a Christian context. With other church colleges that take both the Christian and the humanistic traditions seriously, St. Olaf has experienced recurring tensions in resisting dogmatism on the one hand and what Jacques Maritain has called "anthropocentric humanism" on the other hand. On the whole, St. Olaf has been spared interference from church authorities, thanks to strong presidents who have maintained the freedom of the College to set its own course. It has not been able to avoid the secularizing influences of the age, however, but neither has it expected or wanted to live in isolation from the storm and stress of modern culture. Specific examples will be furnished later, but at this point one can say that St. Olaf has compiled a solid record in transmitting to students a humanistic heritage intelligently related to the Christian faith.

To move from Northfield to St. Paul, where the College of St. Catherine was founded in 1905, is to move from rural to urban, from Lutheran to Roman Catholic, from Norwegians to Irish, and from a co-educational college to one for women. Nevertheless, there is common ground between St. Catherine's and the other three colleges in the firmly established determination to keep the ties strong between the liberal arts and the Christian view of life.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet made their way to St. Paul in 1851, ~~They were originally French~~ coming up the Mississippi from St. Louis on a paddle-wheel steamboat to minister to "savages, infidels, and heretics." They lost little time, quickly founding St. Joseph's Academy, St. Joseph's Hospital, a free school for girls, and St. Mary's School.¹² When the sisters were celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their Congregation's arrival in Minnesota, Archbishop John Ireland, in his expansive but keenly prophetic manner, congratulated them on their promise to build a college for the higher education of young women. That was in August

of 1902; in January of 1905 St. Catherine's officially opened, first as an academy but ready to graduate its first collegians in 1913. Two extraordinary women must be named in connection with St. Catherine's launching, Mother Seraphine Ireland, the Archbishop's sister and leader of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Province of St. Paul from 1882 to 1921, and Sister Antonia McHugh, whom Mother Seraphine appointed Dean of St. Catherine's in 1914. That St. Catherine's became "outstanding among colleges for women"¹³ was due to Sister Antonia's overflowing talents and unremitting drive, first as Dean and from 1929 until her retirement in 1937 as President.

The name "St. Catherine" had been chosen for the College by Archbishop Ireland because from ancient times this saint and her symbol, the wheel, had been associated with learning. The Archbishop also made a conscious choice in urging Sister Antonia to pursue her own education at the University of Chicago. Besides earning bachelor's degrees in history and education, and a master's degree in history, Sister Antonia had returned from Chicago fired with enthusiasm to establish similarly high standards at St. Catherine's. Her success in doing so is indicated by the winning of accreditation by the North Central Association in 1916, St. Catherine's thus becoming the first Catholic college for women so recognized. Another goal she soon set for the College was a Phi Beta Kappa chapter; it became a reality on May 17, 1938 when Sister Antonia herself became the first honorary member.¹⁴

St. Catherine's has endeavored to keep the major emphasis on the humanities; prior to World War II 40 to 50 per cent of all courses were in that category. Sister Antonia constantly pressed her faculty to pursue their graduate studies to the Ph. D. with the result that the College developed impressive teaching strength in ancient and modern languages, ^{history,} English, the fine arts, theology and philosophy. Today the wider community is made aware of that dedication to the arts and the humanities through the Sister Antonia McHugh Fine Arts Complex, finished in 1970, which includes a visual arts building, an experimental theater

and speech facility, music classrooms and practice rooms, and the I. A. O'Shaughnessy Auditorium. This 1800 seat auditorium is used regularly for concerts by the Minnesota Orchestra and by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

2. Explicit connections with Church bodies. This characteristic of the four colleges requires little elaboration since all are colleges of the Church by definition. The church affiliations have been evident in the preceding discussion, especially where material has been offered regarding the initial establishment of the institutions. The Benedictine Order which made Saint John's University a reality has a 1,400 hundred years tradition of learning under the rubric of "Worship and Work." Luther and St. Olaf are direct descendants of the Lutheran Reformation which arose in a German university under the inspiration of an Augustinian monk whose primary position was that of a university professor. St. Catherine's came into being, as we have seen, through the efforts of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, an order of nuns founded in France in the 17th century.

With reference to the establishment of church colleges in the latter half of the 19th century, an important but seldom appreciated point needs to be made. The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 provided that each State should receive public lands to fund at least one college. These colleges would not exclude "other scientific or classical studies" but their main objective was "to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts."¹⁵ This was quite a different direction than that chosen by church leaders who ventured to fashion schools of the classical type. The land-grant colleges were essentially interested in training; the church colleges were interested in educating persons. "The aim of education is the realization in the individual of that which is uniquely and universally human. The aim of training is the development of a particular function."¹⁶ It is not a matter of one being practical and the other not so. Early St.

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Olaf documents, for example, speak unabashedly about preparing students "for practical life." But a slight difference in language is revealing; Congressman Morrill wrote of "liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in [italics added] the several pursuits and professions of life."

In his book, From State Church to Pluralism, Franklin Littell has an observation regarding the Morrill Act which is pertinent to our discussion. He states that this legislation "shifted the center of gravity in American higher education from Christian and humane purposes to secular and pragmatic goals." Moreover, he finds it ironic that the state legislatures were "controlled by Methodists and Baptists and Disciples and others who wanted their children to have training in agricultural science, mechanical engineering and other 'useful' skills without the danger of exposure to Greek philosophy, Latin letters, Roman jurisprudence, and other classical pursuits."¹⁷

The implication of the contrast between the infant church colleges and the new land-grant colleges is that the church colleges, motivated by a profound interest in the ultimate good of man, appeared on the scene as vehicles of the classical humanistic tradition close to the time when the Land Grant Act was ~~introducing~~ introducing technical, pre-professional training into the programs ~~of~~ of American higher education. Without overdrawing the contrast, since the church colleges themselves have had some pre-professional programs, one can appreciate the strategic role they play in stressing the humanities.

We have noted that the four colleges in question have maintained explicit ties with their sponsoring Church bodies—Saint John's and St. Catherine's with the Roman Catholic Church; Luther and St. Olaf with the American Lutheran Church. Even though St. Olaf in its early years was without a firm church connection, but in search of one, the founders were emphatic in wanting to link the school with the Lutheran Church. Pastor Muus was not impressed by schools which claimed to inculcate "Christian principles" but disavowed allegiance to any "Christian sect."¹⁸

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There has been considerable discussion of

* In our own time, the phenomenon of "American civil religion" (Robert Bellah), ~~has appeared~~, prompting some observers to uneasy thoughts about the possible future "establishment" of civil religion. Against such a threat, Herbert Richardson has underlined the importance of "institutionalized ecclesiastical religion," that is, the religion of the Church bodies, as having the strength to challenge the state's claim to exercise total authority over society. Mere individualistic beliefs will not check totalitarian tendencies. Richardson comments that the Nazi state tolerated and encouraged "freedom of religion." "It allowed every individual to believe what he wished as long as that belief did not seek an institutional expression that might interfere with the state's ordering of time and space."¹⁹ Even if there is an alarmist note in Richardson's viewpoint, as has been suggested, the fact remains that the humanistic outlook is already under attack within our culture generally, if not expressly by the state, and one center of resistance is to be found in colleges of the Church which continue to teach the dignity and inviolability of human personality.

3. A Positive View of Culture. The four colleges whose common characteristics are being described in these pages also share with one another the long-standing habit of showing a positive interest in cultural values. The first manifestation of this interest is the respect the colleges have shown toward their own cultural heritages, whether it be the Benedictine life of study and prayer honored at Saint John's or the determination to keep alive the memory of the Norwegian pioneer immigrants embodied in the Norwegian-American museum in Decorah, which Luther College established. More broadly, the study of the entire history of Western civilization has always characterized the curricula at these four colleges. And more specifically, even a brief exposure to these colleges quickly reveals how the histories of the institutions remain vital to the consideration of new problems. 11

The second indication of a positive view of culture at the two Roman Catholic and two Lutheran colleges is the fact that these schools have sensed an obligation to society to present the best examples of cultural achievement to their students, their constituents, and to the general public. Sometimes this has meant musical performances of classical compositions, theatrical performances of great plays, discussions of masterpieces of world literature, and the extension of these same efforts through graduates who have worked to raise the cultural level of their own communities. But in addition to honoring the culture of the past, the colleges have encouraged students and faculty members to step out creatively to bring fresh contributions to the fields of literature, drama, the visual and plastic arts, music, poetry, and architecture. Such efforts receive constant stimulation from the veritable parade of world-renowned artists and musicians and other public figures who visit the campuses year by year. In the early spring of 1977, for example, St. Olaf students had the opportunity to see and hear Krzysztof Penderecki and perform music under his direction, and to attend a slide presentation given by Paolo Soleri, the architect.

For these colleges to savor their task of promoting the best of past and contemporary cultural forms/^{means also}~~includes~~ their assumption of a critical posture over against lower quality cultural endeavors. The function of criticizing society and its values has always been associated with liberal learning in all its facets and especially the humanistic disciplines, when one thinks of culture in its widest sense. In its more restricted sense, the world of art, music, poetry, literature, and architecture, culture can be addressed very effectively when the liberal arts colleges adopt and display high standards in these fields. Thus the criticism is not so much a series of fulminations against what is shoddy and banal as it is a steady demonstration of what is noble and worthwhile.

While some of these observations may seem self-evident, given the reputations these colleges have succeeded in establishing over the decades, they should be set forth in order to counter-act the popular assumption that cultural life is thwarted in settings where the Church is represented, and the correlative assumption that the arts require a totally secular atmosphere if they are to flourish. During their early years of struggle and hardship, it must be admitted, these four colleges had relatively little to offer by way of cultural contributions. Nevertheless, they assumed the task of lifting the cultural awareness of their people from the very beginning, illustrated somewhat touchingly by the "weary days of peddling" when the Sisters of St. Joseph went about selling copies of Archbishop Ireland's book, The Church and Modern Society, in order to secure money to start the College of St. Catherine.²⁰ Or one reads with interest of the efforts made on behalf of "poor and threadbare" students by Mrs. Nils O. Brandt, wife of the Luther College pastor, who invited lonely students to the parsonage during Christmas holidays, served cookies, arranged games, "and took care that in everything due attention was paid to the proprieties and the little niceties of decorum."²¹ Even on that humble level, the early leaders set an important direction in developing some cultural awareness.

4. European and immigrant roots. One reason that St. John's, Luther, St. Olaf, and St. Catherine's instinctively set their sights on cultural advance is that all four institutions had a cultural base to begin with. They were communities in close touch with European points of origin. From the Benedictine monastery at Metten, in Bavaria, Boniface Wimmer emigrated to western Pennsylvania where he became abbot of St. Vincent's monastery. Soon he and others were made aware of the large numbers of German-born Catholics in Minnesota. A small party including two Benedictine brothers traveled to Minnesota in the spring of 1856 and Abbot Wimmer himself visited them in October of that year, looking over the land west of St. Cloud and agreeing that it would be an ideal place for the new monastery, St. John's.²² The monastery and the university

were located in a German Catholic area and for some time the monks and students spoke German. Abbot Alexius Edelbrock favored greater use of English as part of his efforts to Americanize St. John's but German influences remained.

Luther and St. Olaf were unavoidably Norwegian their first years, but St. Olaf's leaders were more aggressive in making English the official language of the school from the outset. St. Catherine's seems to be the exception among the four as far as ^{not} having to make a language transition is concerned, but it joins the others in tracing its roots to Europe inasmuch as the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet began work in France in the 17th century. It is interesting that St. Catherine's has placed emphasis on the teaching of the Romance languages, perhaps because Sister Antonia McHugh was proficient in French.²³ But all four colleges have given modern European languages very solid support, with language laboratories in recent times improving the teaching and learning.

The ties with Europe involve more than historical origins and use of the European languages. They signify the continuation on American soil of old traditions of learning, of culture, of churchmanship, and of profoundly felt conceptions concerning human life, death, and destiny. It is difficult to find neat verbal labels for many of these subtle values. One may attempt to sum them up by saying that the founders and leaders of the four institutions carried with them, from their European origins, a deep sense of the organic nature of the total human experience. In an instinctive way, they sought wholeness and integration, and resisted fragmentation; they sought community, and resisted individualism; they respected tradition, and were suspicious of novelties; they understood continuity, and were wary of whatever promised only momentary benefit; some of them were aristocratic, remaining skeptical of the vaunted democratic ideal.

The complexities of the immigrant experience were familiar to many of the Benedictines at St. John's, but perhaps Luther and St. Olaf offer more vivid examples of how the immigrant attitudes added a peculiar coloring to

the work of establishing colleges. This topic could become a large one to develop, but the essential point is that the Norwegians who founded Luther and St. Olaf experienced the tensions of trying to function in two worlds at the same time. They were determined that their children and grandchildren should be well prepared to become good citizens of the United States of America. On the other hand, they did not wish to let go of their own cultural and religious heritage which, they felt, would also be of benefit to their descendants. In the long run, they found a creative balance which proved workable. Ole E. Rølvaag depicted the psychic toll which immigration exacted in Giants in the Earth. But he and others in the Norwegian-American community also developed the philosophy that Norwegians in this country could best serve themselves and their adopted land by taking honest pride in the Norwegian roots and offering to American society whatever seemed of worth from the Norwegian heritage. Thus they rejected the familiar "melting-pot" idea in favor of claiming their identity as Norwegian-Americans. Rølvaag himself was instrumental in the founding of the Norwegian-American Historical Association in 1925, an organization which has steadily encouraged the collection and publishing of a wide variety of immigrant studies. With its offices and archives housed at St. Olaf in the Rølvaag Memorial Library, the Association's unique resources are accessible to students as well as to the general public.

Finally, it should be stated that the immigrants' sense of being "outsiders" to the world of the "Yankees" added to their determination to build and found strong colleges. At times this determination was combined with a lingering sense of inferiority over against more established, wealthier schools. Often a model of the "standard, American" college would be invoked to justify a proposed change. But throughout the inevitable process of Americanization there remained a strong sense of institutional identity which was partly formed by consciousness of the European, immigrant roots.

5. Regional and National Significance. It is to be expected that any college will make itself known within its immediate region and, if it does certain things especially well, can take pride in having a national reputation. However, the regional influence cannot be taken for granted. Despite vast improvements in transportation and communication, little may be known about some very good colleges by people living within a few miles of the campuses. But that may be the case because the colleges have concentrated on the educational enterprise centering on the campus and have not had resources for cultivating a greater regional visibility.

The four colleges we are discussing in these pages are similar in that they belong to the Upper Midwest region in a special way and have had some success in making the region aware of their activities. They are favored by being located in a section of the Midwest where there are sizeable Roman Catholic and Lutheran populations. Hence they have grown up in a close relationship with their supporting constituencies. Mutual benefits have been realized, especially when contributing alumni live close enough to their alma mater to take advantage of concerts, plays, athletic contests, and other public events held on campus. A good example is the enjoyment of various types of performances in O'Shaughnessy Auditorium by St. Paul area alumnae of the College of St. Catherine.

With all four colleges now being equipped with the kind of attractive facilities which draw a wide variety of special interest groups to the campuses for conferences, seminars, workshops, and institutes, it is clear that thousands of persons each year gain some sort of acquaintance, superficial as it often is, with the institutions. The more significant of such occasions are those in which the visitors are allowed to participate in the exchange of those ideas and experiences which lie at the heart of the religious and humanistic purposes of the colleges. In this light one thinks of the Liturgical Summer Schools at St. John's University originated in 1929 by Father Virgil Michel, ^{the} ~~an~~ outstanding leader in bringing the

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Liturgical Movement to America. The genius of this movement was its conception of the liturgy as a community-creating force in response to the alienation and isolation suffered by industrial workers in the 19th and 20th centuries.

For the past twenty years St. Olaf College has hosted a Summer Theological Conference which draws up to five hundred pastors and other church workers for a week of theological reflection led by theologians and preachers from a variety of denominations. In 1976, for example, the College was pleased to have its invitation accepted by His Eminence, Jan Cardinal Willebrands, President of the Vatican's Secretariat for Christian Unity.

In 1956 Luther College inaugurated a five-year series of Martin Luther Lectures as part of its Centennial observances. The lectures were given by the world's leading experts on Martin Luther's life and significance, including Roland H. Bainton of Yale, E. Gordon Rupp of Manchester University, England, and Regin Prenter of the University of Aarhus in Denmark. Luther College Press published the lectures in five successive volumes.²⁴

These are examples of what the colleges have done individually to serve their region in a public way, apart from the obvious fact that they draw the majority of their students from the Upper Midwest. The time is ripe for new cooperative ventures through which they can combine their resources to make a greater impact, bringing to a wider public those spiritual and humanistic values which are central to their mission.

As soon as one begins to think about national significance, the temptation arises to adopt the language of promotional brochures. In the case of these four colleges, it may suffice to mention one or two items which seem to suggest that the schools have indeed gained a measure of national attention. Saint John's University is known throughout the country for the bold yet sensitive architecture designed by Marcel Breuer, with the great Abbey and University Church as the most striking illustration of how concrete, steel,

and glass have been used to issue a vibrant contemporary testimony to the living faith of the community.

That which has most effectively brought national attention to both Luther College and St. Olaf is their strong traditions of excellence in music. The Luther College Concert Band is one of the oldest in the nation. It has taken annual concert tours and has given performances in European countries. The Nordic Choir has gained a national reputation for presenting the finest vocal music in the Christian tradition. F. Melius Christiansen, the founder of the St. Olaf Choir, is credited with pioneering in the development of a cappella singing in this country. Under its present conductor, Kenneth Jennings, the Choir has continued its annual tours throughout the country and has sung in Europe in 1970, 1972, and 1975. In 1972 the St. Olaf Choir opened the Strasbourg International Music Festival. During the past twenty years the St. Olaf Band has experienced a renaissance under Miles Johnson, recovering the instrumental side of the ^{heritage of} F. Melius Christiansen whose initial energies at St. Olaf were given to perfecting the Band, which he took to Europe in 1909.

The College of St. Catherine won national recognition in 1937 when it became the only Catholic women's college in the country to be granted a Phi Beta Kappa chapter. Formal installation of the charter members took place the following spring. Another distinction came to the College in 1963 when it was selected by the Ford Foundation for a \$1,000,000 grant, the only Catholic institution in the country so honored. Recognition has also come in the form of architectural prizes for the impressive Mother Antonia McHugh Fine Arts Center.

Judging from the mark they have made in the past, these four colleges will continue to have their names before the nation from time to time. In the meantime, the full scope of their regional significance needs to be realized. One

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of the colleges, Luther, is located in northern Iowa but it belongs no less to the area. In some ways the orientation of Luther College is in fact northward toward Minnesota rather than toward the other parts of Iowa. The Luther College radio station, ~~KLSE~~ ^{KLSE} ~~(or KLCB)~~, is a part of the Minnesota public radio network. Luther's AM station was one of the earliest in the Midwest, dating from 1926.

St. Olaf College and Saint John's University have also pioneered in radio. At St. Olaf, the physics department personnel were experimenting with "wireless telegraphy" as early as 1918. By 1922 station WCAL became a reality, the only college broadcasting station in Minnesota.²⁵ Having survived many financial trials, WCAL ^{since 1937} ~~for many years~~ has shared certain broadcast hours with KUOM, the University of Minnesota station. WCAL-FM has been in service ^{since 1968} ~~for some time~~ offering non-commercial broadcasting and participating in National Public Radio, ~~and Minnesota Public Radio~~. Today another non-commercial station is in existence, KSJN, thanks to the initiative of Saint John's University under its president, Father Coleman Barry. KSJN is an outgrowth of the St. John's station, KSJR, founded in 1967.

The programming of these college radio stations represents a clear example of how the colleges are currently contributing to regional culture. Listeners are able to enjoy programs originating on the campuses as well as programs of broader state and national interest on the public radio network. But, as indicated above, much more should be done to extend the influence of the colleges' commitment to the humanistic disciplines to larger numbers within the Upper Midwest part of the country. It is certain that the cooperation of the four colleges in studying and restating the nature of the humanist tradition will lead to a wider awareness in the Upper Midwest that these institutions are deeply concerned about the meaning and quality of human existence.

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sciences, but also nurseries of the fine arts, in order to develop a better taste for these things and to keep from our people the American mercenary spirit. . . ."²⁶ Wimmer's determination was realized at the first American abbey, St. Vincent's in Pennsylvania, where a large monastery library was collected with extensive gifts from the Bavarian State Library in Munich. The classical authors, music, and art found strong places in the seminary and college at St. Vincent's.

The same emphases appeared when Saint John's was established in 1857. The goal of Saint John's, said Wimmer, was that the entire community "should become a center which will be of service to both the civilized and uncivilized peoples of Minnesota." Education was based on a classical course, with strong emphases on music, art, and especially the liturgy. Participating in the liturgy was a better laboratory for social regeneration than any school of social philosophy, it was said. Living, teaching, and learning within a liturgical context was described in a St. John's catalog in this fashion: "Its goal is not to make a living, but to live as a human being. The end product is a man of culture and character: the highest dignity of the human personality. . . . Benedictine education steepes the whole man in the mystico-social environment of the liturgy and of the family and so tries to form the perfect Christian."

Father Virgil Michel and the Liturgical Movement deserve special mention in a survey of Saint John's special contribution to the cause of a Christian humanism. Sent to Europe for further theological study in 1924, Michel visited centers of the Liturgical Movement in Belgium and Germany. This movement, described briefly in the previous section, was much more than a conventional re-emphasis on liturgical practice. It was rather a comprehensive Catholic response to the problems of industrialization, addressing itself to

the alienated factory worker whose life was constricted to long hours before the machine and a miserable, lonely existence in his tenement. The Liturgical Movement employed the liturgy of the Church as a means for recreating the lost sense of community experienced by the Catholic laity.

On his return to Saint John's, Father Michel launched the Liturgical Movement in the United States, facets of which were the Liturgical Summer School and the Liturgical Day, both initiated at Saint John's. He served as Dean of Saint John's from 1933 to 1938, during which time he took up various social problems. In 1934 he founded the Social Institute which began adult education courses, cooperative unions, and credit unions. Of these activities Father Michel said, "The liturgy does not offer a detailed scheme of economic reconstruction. But it does give us a proper concept and understanding of what society is like, through its model, the Mystical Body of Christ. And it puts this concept into action in its worship and wants us to live it out in everyday life."

Father Virgil Michel corresponded with Mortimer Adler of the University of Chicago concerning a proposed experiment along the lines of Adler's "Great Books" program. Twenty qualified students would spend two years reading the classics, hearing public lectures, and attending seminars; the next two years would consist of reading and writing, science, mathematics, and Greek tutorials. Father Michel's unexpected death in the fall of 1938 prevented the program from being undertaken, but the readiness of the University to implement it shows that St. John's shared the Adler and Hutchins concern that the liberal arts curriculum needed re-direction.²⁷

Earlier in the century the liberal arts held the field; many more students chose the classical rather than the scientific course.²⁸ Abbot Alcuin Deutsch, who headed Saint John's from 1922 to 1951, only reluctantly approved application for North Central accreditation, which did not come until 1950. When the curriculum was thoroughly re-studied in 1946-47, a department of theology for lay

students was established, a major in music was made available for the first time, divisional majors in social science and natural science were inaugurated, and senior comprehensive examinations were begun as part of a move toward greater integration.²⁹ In the early 1960s a language laboratory was introduced and an interdepartmental humanities major was offered. Another group of changes took place in 1967 when the faculty voted to adopt the four-one-four calendar, in part to facilitate increased cooperation with neighboring St. Benedict's College. At the same time, a number of course requirements were dropped and electives made available. The aim was to stress flexibility, depth, and the interests of students. These changes appear to some to be a threat to the long-standing strength of Saint John's in the liberal arts, a point to which this discussion will return.

Despite curriculum changes, Saint John's University continues to proclaim the message of man's dignity as the child of God in many different ways--the splendid Abbey Church, the Ecumenical Institute, the liturgical life of the community, the Chair of Jewish Studies established in 1969, continuing education for Minnesota clergy of all faiths, the Microfilm Manuscript Library, cooperative programs with St. Benedict's and St. Cloud State, and many other means. "By combining boldness of thought and the use of twentieth-century materials and techniques with idealism and the long view, the institution continues to honor its centuries-old tradition," writes one historian, who also notes that the sociologist-author Father Andrew M. Greeley lists St. John's as one of the eight outstanding American Catholic colleges and universities.³⁰

Luther College

When Luther College opened its doors in 1861 it was an outpost of European Christian humanism on the frontier. Its founders were well-educated Norwegian pastors whose first concern was to prepare men to take up the study of theology and enter the parish ministry. A parallel aim was the preparation of parochial

school teachers. But the 1883 catalog, the first to state the purposes of the College in English, indicates that Luther intended to be more than a "preacher's school."

The institution owes its origin to the growing demand for educated men who could preach the Word of Life to the rapidly increasing Norwegian population of this country. The chief object of the College is to meet this demand; but it also aims to afford the advantages of a liberal education to any youth desiring to avail himself of the same.³¹

For future ministers, teachers, and all others, the curricular fare was solidly classical, following the Latin school idea. The study of Latin and Greek was required, naturally; even Hebrew remained among the requirements through the first sixty years of the school's existence.³² The classical curriculum remained intact until the 1920s when the natural sciences and behavioral sciences began to appear as modifications of the rigid pattern maintained for so long. More thorough revisions came about in 1931 but despite the introduction of the elective system, the broadening of the course offerings in all areas, and the falling off of interest in classical learning generally, Luther College continues to give strong support to the department of classics

Required courses in religion have always been a feature of Luther College. The kind of religious standpoint fostered in the teaching constituted a real strength during the many decades when Luther was a "defender of the faith" college. This means that the orthodox Lutheranism carried over from 17th century theology achieved a synthesis between faith and reason. While students were expected to be loyal to correct doctrine and pious in their personal lives, they were also expected to think clearly. The dogmatic and philosophical framework within which they exercised their minds was rather tightly circumscribed, but it provided a sturdy intellectual preparation for integrated lives of personal fulfillment and service to their communities.

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The centenary year, 1961, marked a radical shift from the orthodox outlook to the adoption of the historical-critical methods in matters of theological study. A new administration assumed leadership and a complete turn-over took place in the Department of Religion. The fourteen hour requirement in religion was ^{later} reduced to eight. An ecumenical spirit informed the religion offerings as a whole, and new courses were given in "Catholic Life and Thought," in Judaism, and in eastern religions. For eight years Luther and Saint John's ^{exchanged} ~~sent~~ professors of theology, ~~to one another's campuses to teach.~~ The Department of Religion has participated actively in ^{several} ~~more than one~~ interdisciplinary courses in recent years.

The current Luther College catalog expresses the posture of the institution regarding the integration of faith and learning.

As an academic community, Luther College is committed to the liberal arts. It believes that there is a way and kind of learning which frees persons from bondage to their immediate interests and present knowledge, and propels them on the adventure of responsible human existence. It believes in an education which not only trains young minds and fills them with knowledge, but opens them and makes them flexible and resilient enough to grow and to meet the challenge of accelerated change which will confront them throughout their lives.

As a community of Christian students and faculty, Luther College is committed to serve as an advance guard of the Church--to deal with the problems facing human beings in the world. It is a community especially devoted to discovering the significance of the arts and sciences for the life of faith.³³

Luther was one of six institutions studied over a period of four years by ^{of U of Calif, Berkeley} Dr. Paul Heist who was interested in the impact of the colleges on their students. In a 1973 he reported his findings in a lecture at the Lutheran Educational Conference. The following statements are from the summary of his study:

Compared with other schools, Luther had a significantly larger sample of students increasing the level of their intellectual disposition and interest in learning. Luther had a greater number of students who made both large and medium shifts in their general personality orientation. There was a greater degree of satisfaction with the college and their education than other groups studied. Luther graduates were unique in continuing a high religious activity involvement.³⁴

Contributing to the satisfactions experienced by Luther students has been the cultivation of music and arts at their college. As indicated in a previous section, band and choral music have reached levels of extraordinary quality over the years. The Norwegian-American painter Herbjørn Gausta, student at Luther and instructor in drawing and painting in the 1880s, stimulated interest in that discipline. Theater activity increased after the College became coeducational in 1936 but even before that time students were led into the plays of the ancient Greeks, of Shakespeare, and of the Norwegian dramatist, Henrik Ibsen.

High priority has always been given to the library and library holdings at Luther. The relatively new ^{Brews} ~~Keren~~ Library, built in 1969, is an exceptionally well-planned facility with over 200,000 volumes. One of several able librarians who have served Luther was Karl T. Jacobsen who both before and following his retirement was consulted by various Lutheran theological seminaries who called upon him for help in reorganizing their collections.³⁵ The Norwegian-American museum, initiated by Luther College with energetic leadership given by the historian Knut Gjerset, has been described as the finest ethnic museum in America.

To return to the study prepared by Paul Heist, his concluding comments present a favorable picture of Luther's success in making a positive impact on its students.

The majority of Luther graduates of 1970 presented a seemingly healthy balance of academic interests, religious beliefs and practices, humanitarian concerns, and a social sophistication adequate to the contemporary world.³⁶

There is another side of the picture which will be taken up later in an attempt to describe the tensions and problems which cause concern about the Christian and humanistic orientation of the College.

St. Olaf College

Since its founding in 1874 St. Olaf College has sustained an attitude of free inquiry into the diverse elements of human culture, striking a balance between continuity with the original aims of the school and openness to change. The founders set out "to give young men and women a practical education on the foundation of Christianity."³⁷ Among Norwegian Lutherans in 1874, coeducation was a rather novel feature. St. Olaf was also to break new ground by placing first emphasis on education for whatever role the graduate found in society, not singling out the preparation of future ministers. "Practical" education in the phrase above thus means "general education." And the reference to Christianity as the foundation is appropriate; the aim was not to have a "school of religion" but to relate the teaching to the Christian faith as taught by the Lutheran Church. A centennial publication casts the founders' purpose in this form: "It was the aim of the founders to prepare an educated citizenry for church and society by combining academic and religious ingredients in a coherent educational scheme."³⁸

The fulfilment of this aim through a hundred years and more was made possible through exceptionally hard work on the part of administrators and teachers, but also through the freedom which the College developed internally and in its relation to the Church. Beginning as an independent corporation, it sought out a Church connection and struggled successfully to shape that connection in such a way that the partnership between College and Church became one of mutual service and support. This kind of relationship proved particularly valuable in enabling the College to build a strong faculty. Various St. Olaf presidents showed courage and foresight in hiring and supporting professors whose ideas seemed risky in the judgment of wary church people. During a critical period in the early 1890s, the charge that St. Olaf was too much a "humanistic" institution was issued by a faction which did not appreciate general education but held that a church college should concentrate on preparing future pastors and

other church workers.³⁹ The same faction wrote letters disdaining St. Olaf for "its luxurious facilities, its doctors of philosophy, its masters of arts," all of which were in quite modest supply at the College in 1890.

As one crisis after another passed, St. Olaf was developing as a lively liberal arts college with perceptive leaders, imaginative faculty members, a stabilized relationship with the Church, eager students, and enough money to build the first library and two dormitories before World War I broke out. In 1918 Lars W. Boe became president and "took hold" of the College in his own inimitable, vigorous fashion. During his presidency, 1918 to 1942, St. Olaf moved forward aggressively on all fronts. During the depression years the faculty proved its intensive loyalty to the College by accepting salary cuts and upholding institutional morale. Before Boe died in 1942 he saw the fulfillment of his dream of a new library which was named Rølvaag Memorial Library despite some grumbling in the Church that Rølvaag's novels were too earthy.

North Central accreditation had been secured in 1915, and Boe had early set his sights on a Phi Beta Kappa chapter but this honor did not come until the fall of 1949. St. Olaf thus became the fourth institution of higher learning in the State of Minnesota to be granted membership in this society. Two years previously, the St. Olaf chemistry department had been approved by the American Chemical Society. In 1950 chapters of two additional honorary societies were established, Sigma Pi Sigma, physics, and Pi Gamma Mu, social sciences.
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To the present time, St. Olaf has been able to maintain acceptance of the religion requirement--fourteen hours until 1964 when the inauguration of the 4-1-4 calendar reduced it slightly to three semester courses. This requirement, coupled with a growth of the student body to about 2800, has meant a sizeable religion faculty, now numbering fourteen teachers. Over the years the religion teachers have exerted leadership in the College by participating in key committees and in general identifying themselves with

the historic purpose of the College: liberal education in harmony with the Christian faith. Members of the ^{religion and} philosophy departments have often supplied important studies of the humanistic, liberal arts tradition in concert with colleagues at St. Olaf and at other institutions. Published examples of this ongoing concern are Integration in the Christian Liberal Arts College, 1956, edited by Howard Hong, and Christian Faith and the Liberal Arts, 1960, edited by Harold Ditmanson, Howard Hong, and Warren Quanbeck.

One of the most visible symbols of St. Olaf's dedication to the ennobling of man by the spirit of God is the continued ministry of the St. Olaf Choir, on campus, in congregations, and on concert tours in this country and abroad. Whatever has been said about the musical excellence of the student singers under the Christiansens and now under Kenneth Jennings, the fact remains that the Choir's contribution is primarily in singing the great music of the Church. Similarly, Arnold Flaten's fame as a sculptor grew out of a profoundly personal vision of man as God's highest creature.

In a number of interesting ways St. Olaf has revised and extended its educational mission during the past twenty years or so. In 1958 it joined the Associated Colleges of the Midwest to cooperate on many levels with such colleges as Carleton, Lawrence, Beloit, and Knox. The new 4-1-4 calendar introduced in 1964 quickly capitalized on the January interim course for experimentation on campus and several new courses abroad, including a popular interim in Rome. International studies gained impressive momentum in the mid-sixties to the point where 82% of the class of 1973 had been abroad on a semester or interim program during their four years at St. Olaf. In 1969 an experimental college, the Paracollege, began work with 70 students whose programs were designed around tutorials, independent study, and comprehensive examinations. Innovation has also taken place in Black studies, Asian, American, urban, and work-study programs.

In its chapter on Liberal Education, the centennial committee which wrote "Identity and Mission in a Changing Context," offered this definition of the goal of liberal learning: "We wish to argue that liberal education has as its central objective the integrated development of intellect, imagination, and will through serious engagement with the liberal arts and sciences. . . . Our description of liberal education matches our understanding of the wholeness of human personality."⁴¹

Through its first century, St. Olaf College has exercised its freedom as a private liberal arts college of the Church to pursue this goal of integrated development of all the human powers. There are signs, in the record of its faculty and its alumni, that some success has been achieved in that direction. But there are other signs, to be noted in a later context, that external pressures and the multiplying of ancillary activities are making more tenuous the delicate enterprise of interpreting liberal education with sufficient regard for the Christian contribution to humanism.

College of St. Catherine

In turning to the particular contributions of the College of St. Catherine in furthering its reputation as a college committed to the humanities and the Christian outlook, one finds several clear instances in the decades since the Phi Beta Kappa chapter was awarded in 1937. From 1938 to 1941 St. Catherine's participated with twenty-one other institutions in a study designed to test the efficiency of teaching freshmen and sophomores. The study was sponsored by the American Council on Education and supported by a grant from the General Education Board. It was followed in 1939 by another joint study, this one concerned with teacher education, involving St. Catherine's and thirty-four other colleges. These studies stimulated intellectual excitement at the College for several years.⁴²

As World War II was ending and the College was relieved of some of the strains associated with the cadet nurses program, St. Catherine's students expressed their desire for more offerings in the liberal arts. A major in humanities was begun in 1944, a course in religion for non-Catholics was offered, and a re-study of the curriculum resulted in the strengthening of the philosophy and theology requirements from two to four years of work in each of these fields.⁴³ It seems characteristic of St. Catherine's to refurbish its liberal arts heritage from time to time whenever preprofessional and occupation oriented courses become numerous.

In 1954 St. Catherine's became the first Minnesota college to install a language laboratory. This development was in keeping with the constant leadership St. Catherine's has given in modern language study. For more than a decade the College has conducted institutes for secondary French teachers at Rennes, France. Sister Marie Philip Haley has harvested the highest honors France has to bestow for her work at these summer institutes. St. Catherine's faculty members have won Fulbright grants for foreign language study in Germany and Italy as well as France. The College has also had distinguished teachers in Spanish and in the classical languages for half a century and more.

Since the 1940s the College of St. Catherine has entered fully into inter-institutional cooperation. Together with Macalester, Hamline, Augsburg, and St. Thomas, it participates in The Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities. It has sought various opportunities of capitalizing on its status as an urban college, taking advantage of the urban environment of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

With the assistance of a \$20,000 grant from the Hill Foundation, St. Catherine's introduced an interdisciplinary humanities sequence for freshmen in 1956. In the early sixties the College expanded its area studies program with courses on Africa and India arranged in cooperation with Hamline, Macalester, and St. Thomas. On the St. Catherine's campus a new sequence in Latin American studies was instituted.

Since its founding in 1905, the College of St. Catherine has been proud of all three facets of its description as a Catholic liberal arts college for women. In 1976 the College had an opportunity to consider whether or not it wished to change one of those characteristics--"for women"--when the matter of becoming a coeducational institution was discussed. The result was the reaffirmation of the commitment to be a college for women. Coeducation was voted down. While this decision clearly continues one of the chief identifying marks of the College, it remains to be seen whether some advocates of contemporary feminism will claim for their cause a higher priority than religion traditionally has received at St. Catherine's.

As we shall note in the next section, all four of the colleges, with their traditional orientation toward humanism, the liberal arts, and the perspective given by the Christian faith, are currently experiencing various pressures to dilute some of their central emphases. These pressures are seldom in the form of overt opposition to either the humanistic tradition or the Christian heritage, but they are of concern to those who hold that these colleges have attained their present status by being faithful to their historic character.

II. The Challenges to Humanism and the Christian Tradition at the Four Colleges

A. Common Trends

Here we seek to identify a number of trends at the four colleges which have the effect of reducing the strength and potential impact of humanism understood in the light of religion. Some of the observations will apply to American higher education in general.

1. Enrollment factors. The percentage of American students enrolling in church colleges has declined. The four colleges under discussion here have done well in weathering recent threats to enrollment nationally, but the smaller percentage of church college students overall cannot but indicate a decrease in the impact

such colleges can make on American cultural life. Of course the church colleges shared in the post-World War II increase in the student populations, but they were the first to feel the pain of the leveling off period we are now in. When cut-backs are called for, administrators are tempted to start eyeing religion and the other liberal arts disciplines as candidates for excision. Rising enrollments can mean that there are more students taking traditional liberal arts courses; it can also mean that more students are on hand whose interests are focused on pre-professional preparation. The latter situation has appeared at these four Upper Midwest church colleges.

2. The tightening job market. The current difficulty of recent college graduates in finding employment in their chosen fields constitutes an obvious threat to the humanistic disciplines. The veteran habitué of the liberal arts milieu finds himself thinking that he has heard it all before. "What can you do with an English major?" There used to be two answers: 1) "Teach." 2) "Companies are looking for well-rounded people. They'll train you." Today's economy casts doubt on both of those possibilities, causing college students to give more serious consideration to courses offering more certain "usefulness." Some bold voices are declaring that a liberal arts education is still the most desirable undergraduate preparation for later employment, but the voices of occupationalism are increasing in volume.

The four Upper Midwest colleges we are discussing do not claim to be pure specimens of an ideal liberal arts type. They have all instituted courses and programs of a pre-professional sort, including nurses training, occupational therapy, library science, teacher education, and pre-medical education. A statement in ^{the} St. Olaf centennial booklet, "Identity and Mission in a Changing Context," would apply to all of these colleges. "In its desire to help prepare the whole person for participation in post-college life, St. Olaf has defined liberal education broadly enough to include concern for career preparation as well as for the social, interpersonal, and physical well-being of its students."⁴⁴ The problem

is to know where to stop in adding career-related activities to the total program of the college and to infuse existing career-oriented programs with the values of humanism. One thing is certain: the liberal arts, including theology, must be strengthened at this time, for the sake of the students and for the sake of the humanizing influence they will ~~bring to~~ ^{bring to} society.

3. Recent public events. The status of the economy happens to be one of the chief external factors impinging upon higher education today, but it is not so long ago that the Second Vatican Council, the war in Vietnam, and a president's fall into disgrace all sent their particular unsettling forces across the educational landscape. Protestant and Lutheran colleges cheered Vatican II for all it promised by way of closer relations among Christians, and ecumenism became a ready topic in religion courses. Catholic colleges, on the other hand, experienced some negative results from the Council in that continuity with the Christian humanistic tradition now seems more difficult to maintain. The disappearance of Latin means more than a practical shift to the vernacular; it also means losing touch with Latin culture and literature and much of the liturgical tradition of the past. In short, the Catholic student no longer has the same access to his Christian and humanistic heritage that he once had.

The disruptions associated with the war in Vietnam also took their toll with regard to the ideals of humanism. Those who favored the bombings and killings were further desensitized by the callous way the war was reported. Those who were indifferent were confirmed in the popular misconception that the citizen has nothing to do with decisions taken by the government. And even those who opposed the war sometimes drifted far away from their avowed humanism into strong-arm tactics and the denial of freedom of speech to others. In some cases the liberal arts tradition had a few moments of glory as literature or philosophy or religion majors were in the front lines of anti-war demonstrations but that potentially significant witness was buried in the violence and trashing. Perhaps the greatest damage realized

in the student generation was the widespread notion that the only possible alternative to the chaos in the world was a narcissistic retreat into a private sphere of sensuality and exotic religious experimentation. The disclosures of Watergate only tended to reinforce such tendencies while at the same time increasing the young person's disillusionment, not only with public officials but also with all the structures of public life.

For those whose minds are in touch with the meaning of the liberal arts, the discouragements in public life serve to point up some of the enduring truths about human life, individual and corporate. The value of the human personality cannot be measured or extinguished, however brutal human history becomes. The full flowering of human beings requires structures of community, local, regional, national, and international. To be fully human a person needs a sense of vocation, the realization that he or she is called to the worthwhile task of building a humane civilization which will extend into the future. The Jewish and Christian symbol of the Kingdom of God continues to voice the claim that there is meaning, purpose, and a goal in the ongoing human venture.

4. Faculty professionalism. As the smaller church-related liberal arts colleges labored through their early years of struggle, they correctly sensed that their survival depended on the building of strong faculties. The adding of another Ph. D. to the teaching force was cause for rejoicing. It was assumed that the presidents and deans would carefully select candidates who were in full sympathy with the religious aims of the college. As enrollments rose dramatically after World War II, qualified teachers were needed without delay and the screening process was loosened, bringing in new faculty members whose attitude toward the unique character of the church college was sometimes that of neutral tolerance rather than active commitment. Presidents and deans and department chairmen were looking for people of diverse backgrounds in order to correct the image of the church college as parochial, so they did not press the

matter of religious interests too far as they interviewed prospective faculty persons.

The result was that many church colleges, including the four we are discussing, acquired faculty personnel whose first loyalty was to their professional discipline and second loyalty was to the institution as a whole. Ideally, of course, strong professionalism need not be at variance with full support of the church-related character of the college, but it is important to recognize the trend as described above. If the description is valid, it suggests that chief responsibility for the development lay with administrators, though in their defense it must be remembered that there were periods when available Ph. D. holders in certain fields were not as numerous as they have been in recent times.

Another aspect of what we are calling "faculty professionalism" is the fact that graduate schools have been dominated by secularistic assumptions for the past hundred years. Canons of objectivity and disinterested research have been the norm in the non-church universities, which seems only reasonable in our pluralistic society. The difficulty has been that secularistic viewpoints have attained the status of secular dogmas, driving from the field those wider perspectives which afford a place for the contribution of religion to learning. Thus many scholars who come from graduate school to a church college faculty are able to appreciate the religious heritage of such a college only as an adjunct provided for students' devotional needs and not as a substantial element in the intellectual life of the school. It is sometimes, though not always, a different matter with those who took their undergraduate education at a church college.

5. Changes in the Church. We noted above that the changes introduced into the Roman Catholic community by Vatican II were felt by many to be destructive of the classical, Christian, humanistic tradition. Many other Catholics regard Vatican II as implying benefits to Catholic education in the long run even though the period of adjustment is painful. For one thing, Roman Catholic students

will gain an exposure to Protestant theology, mixed blessing that it is. And it is obvious that Roman Catholics are being represented on Protestant campuses by visiting theologians and by textbooks written by Catholic scholars.

Our four Upper Midwest colleges, two Roman Catholic and two Lutheran, are experiencing various effects of changes in the Church at large, including the items already mentioned. But because of the special durability of both the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran styles of churchmanship, the colleges in question have probably suffered considerably less disturbance than one would find in other church-related institutions. Both of these Christian communions place the chief emphasis on the living, eternal God who mediates His good will to humanity through specific, accessible means which are given to the stewardship of the Church. In other words, they are liturgical communities. They have experienced centuries of turbulence and change, and the liturgy itself is not exempt from change, but the liturgy is always at the center of the Church's life as a stabilizing and renewing power. It can even be argued that the non-liturgical families of Christendom find confrontation with change a more traumatic experience because for them the liturgy is whatever human subjectivity at the moment chooses to make it. For Roman Catholics and Lutherans, on the other hand, the liturgy, while never static, is an objective power, always guiding and correcting and reviving the Church and its people.

Translated into educational affairs, the liturgy may serve as a steady focal point around which the learning and teaching enterprise is gathered. It will not dictate curriculum, but it provides a living symbol of the integration of divine reality and human searching. "In Thy light we are illumined."

Other factors related to changes in the Church deserve mention, especially where the changes have a bearing on humanism according to its Christian perspective. Generally speaking, students can be counted on to favor ecclesiastical developments which free people to become "more human." Therefore they welcome liberalized stands on birth control, sexual expression, homosexuality, abortion,

ordination of women, and other such issues, and they relate these concerns to their collegiate studies in religion, sociology, and psychology, for example. In some respects, these attitudes might represent the fulfilment of the church-college, liberal arts ideal: the application to current problems of insights drawn from a solid humanistic tradition. On the other hand, one has to ask whether such viewpoints emerge from a careful study of the full meaning of humanism, or whether they stem from the conventional liberal wisdom of society. The humanism informed by the Church's historic message should be independent enough either to support or to call into question what secular thought regards as "more human." Because the Church had a significant share in developing the Western humanistic tradition, it has an obligation, especially through its colleges, to raise its voice in affirmation of what it understands as the truly human ideal.

These comments are intended to illustrate how changes in the Church have raised challenges to humanism at the church colleges. Roman Catholic colleges can trace certain challenges to the fall-out from the Second Vatican Council, as has been noted above. Non-Catholic church colleges face a more diffused set of challenges, ranging from controversial social issues to the "death-of-God" theology. It is worth observing that some have detected the death of man in the so-called "death-of-God" movement. In any case, if one were to search for a major threat to the Christian understanding of man at the Protestant colleges (Lutherans only reluctantly allow themselves to be counted among Protestants), it can be suggested that these colleges have lost sight of the biblical insight that man is intrinsically a social being whose true humanity develops as he shares his life in community with others. The behavioral sciences with secular resources have demonstrated this fact clearly, but Protestant thought, despite its knowledge of Martin Buber's famous I and Thou and its own theological literature on man in community, continues to define man in nineteenth-century,

atomistic terms. Roman Catholicism has not been totally free of this problem, but it has had the advantage of a grass-roots sense of the Church as the corporate body of Christ, an awareness that Protestants are notoriously slow to grasp. As a result, discussions of man's social nature invariably bog down in quantitative trade-offs between the individual and the community, as if the one must decrease if the other should increase. Insofar as the appreciation of man's corporate existence is insufficiently understood at the church colleges, a large and important dimension of humanism tends to be left out of account.

6. Curricular pluralism. Throughout American higher education there are tendencies toward greater fragmentation, more specialization, less integration of humanistic studies, and additional pre-professional instruction. The condition of the economy as related to job opportunities is but one of the factors responsible for these tendencies. Another is the cafeteria mentality which swept in with a vengeance during the sixties and early seventies. It is exceedingly difficult to develop a sense of the wholeness of the liberal arts tradition when requirements in the humanities are pared down or dropped in favor of a wide array of options. It must be granted that many of the changes in the direction of greater diversity of course offerings were overdue and justified. Few would argue that good education is tied to rigid requirements. But some do argue that excessive fragmentation is damaging to liberal learning. Distribution requirements are of some help in counteracting specialization, but one is dismayed to discover from one current example at St. Olaf College that a student can qualify for the B. A. without a single course in history. If he takes a history course, he can avoid taking any philosophy; if he takes history and philosophy, he can graduate without a course in literature.⁴⁵

It does not seem unfair to suggest that when the cry for more options in the curriculum is raised, the humanities are vulnerable as the area in which to reduce requirements whereas many other sections of the college will employ the leverage they have from their respective professional groups to argue that their segment

of the curriculum is inviolable. Thus the liberal arts are put on the defensive over against a functional view of education. "Don't teach my boy poetry; he's going to be a grocer," said a father to the university authorities. Such a view regards students as social-economic functions, whereas a sound education "is aimed at men in their essential humanness."⁴⁶

The elucidation of the Christian dimension of humanism is more urgent than ever at this moment in history because we can no longer assume that a solid, broadly-based public consensus concerning the meaning of humanity is present to give stability to our society. Would-be proponents of Christian humanism have been lulled into complacency, assuming that men and women of good will are in agreement on the most important human values, and that these are essentially in harmony with the Christian tradition. There is even a theological fashion abroad today which maintains that anything "human" is, by definition, Christian, thereby surrendering the prerogatives both of constructing a Christian vision of humanism and criticizing anti-human counterfeits of humanism. "The dignity of human personality is not grounded in an abstract element common to all men, but is grounded upon the calling of God. Not reason, but self-giving love is what is truly human."⁴⁷ The church-related liberal arts colleges have an obligation and a most unique opportunity to introduce such affirmations into the ongoing dialogue concerning what is human.

Despite the presence of negative features in the common trends described above, it can be reported that the four colleges which we are discussing have adhered to their purpose as centers of Christian and liberal learning to an amazing extent. For a century or more they have weathered a good many assaults on their chosen objectives, and that backlog of valuable experience has made them alert to the threats to humanism in a Christian perspective which are part of their situation in the 1970s.

B. Specific Challenges to Humanism and the Christian Tradition

In this final section we proceed from the common trends which betoken a weakening of the emphasis on humanism as related to a Christian perspective to specific developments at the four colleges which appear to belong to these trends. For this purpose we return to a college-by-college description. An important qualification must be offered with respect to the evidence to follow: our discussion is of signs, trends, directions, not of outright dismantlings of the "Christian humanism" which these colleges have so carefully developed over the many decades of their existence. Our viewpoint is that the colleges have been and still are significant centers where the Christian heritage of humanism is vitally in evidence, but in danger of gradual erosion unless a concerted effort is made to reclaim it. We are also mindful of an obligation to American higher education in general. These colleges are in a unique position to make the case that the whole of the Western humanistic tradition cannot be understood apart from the contributions of religious thought and life to that tradition. If the situation at church colleges is approaching the crisis stage, it follows that the larger field of higher education will be deprived of a significant interpretation of humanism.

Saint John's University

To appreciate the extensive shifts in emphasis at Saint John's in recent years one must recall that from the founding of the University until 1900 the curriculum was based on the medieval trivium and quadrivium. There was a rich concentration on Christian Doctrine, Latin, Greek, English, German, French, mathematics, history, philosophy, rhetoric, poetry, and the humanities. In connection with the latter four areas the student read Plato, Cicero, Tacitus, Livy, Virgil, Homer, Caesar, and several other ancient authors. The aim was to develop a Christian character, to develop "a learned man but also a good man." The curriculum would provide religious instruction, mental discipline, and liberal culture. The 1890-91 catalog declared that "solid classical

training" would form the person and be "the chief means of elevating the intellectual standard of the country."

Toward the end of the nineteenth century encouragement was given to the teaching monks to study at international centers of learning, so Bruno Doerfler was sent to Rome to study theology, Alcuin Deutsch spent six years in Rome and returned to teach philosophy and other courses, and Anselm Ortmann went to Johns Hopkins to earn a Ph. D. Between 1900 and 1925 a conscious aim at Saint John's was to produce graduates who would become leaders in society, whether as priests or laymen. Students took courses in "cultivation of judgment," "imagination and taste," and "moral training," with the classical curriculum remaining as the base, though a Latin thesis was no longer required.

Saint John's had its golden age of Christian Humanism from 1925 to 1960 when the dominant, creative figure was Father Virgil Michel whose strong influence continued beyond his death in 1938. Michel's central principle was that liturgical worship, when properly understood and released as a vital force in community life, could transform culture through social action and bring about a greater measure of social justice. Virgil Michel was inspired by the Liturgical Movement in Europe which he consciously set out to implement in the United States from his position as teacher and Dean at Saint John's.

Believing that "faith is a social responsibility," Father Michel either instituted or inspired others to establish a series of courses which were designed to "show forth Christianity not only as a gospel of the world to come, but as a coherent program for attaining the only possible 'good life on earth'--as alone answering to the best needs and desires of human nature and as the only practical program for all men." One of his own courses was "Catholic Backgrounds of Current Social Theory," relating social theories to Christian social reconstruction in the era beset by the problems of the Depression. Another example of Michel's influence was a course entitled "Social Problems of Today," which presented a critique of capitalism in the

light of Christian social teaching. The Theology Department had several courses which related Christian teaching to practical life, a typical one being "Life in Christ" which had as its aim "to present religion in a practical way for real life, with liturgical orientation." Through a series of Social Institutes held at Saint John's in the 1930s Michel also managed to reach farmers and the people of neighboring small towns with provocative discussions of unions, strikes, and the development of cooperative gas stations, grain elevators, stores, and funeral associations. The Liturgical Press was founded in 1928, primarily to publish the journal Orationes Fratres/Worship, which became the leading liturgical journal in the English speaking world and made the Press the foremost liturgical publisher. All of these interests and developments arose from Virgil Michel's lively grasp of the liturgy as a power for constructive changes in society. He stands out as the giant in the curricular history of Saint John's, demonstrating in a powerful and imaginative way that liturgical Catholicism could provide the foundation of a unique American humanistic education.

The curriculum at Saint John's changed markedly from the Virgil Michel era and influence during the decade of the sixties. The classical curriculum was dropped, retaining only two courses in Latin and two in Greek. After 1967 the courses in sociology, the humanities, theology, and history relating values of Christian civilization to secular problems disappeared from the curriculum. In general, required courses gave way to more individualized programs of study.

One general explanation of the change is that the Second Vatican Council's decisions had the effect of sweeping away the whole Latin culture of Roman Catholicism. More specific evidence is the fact that religious orders suffered losses and at Saint John's, a large number of middle-aged monks left the monastery and their faculty places were taken by laymen. The ratio of monks to laymen shifted to 40%/60%. The theology requirement was reduced to one course in the University. As courses relating Christian ideas to secular problems dropped away, the social sciences in particular gained in offering new courses which were not shaped to

tie the material to the Christian tradition. The social science division, it should be noted, became the division most strongly dominated by laymen.

Concurrent with the curricular changes was a period of turmoil and disruption in student life at the University from about 1963 to 1974. Campus life included more watching of television, more frequent use of cars to leave the campus, optional attendance at mass, and permission to use alcohol on campus. The October 1969 moratorium against the war in Vietnam was followed in 1970 by boycotts and protest meetings both spring and fall, and roads leading to the campus were blocked in the spring of 1972. All of these events involved meetings of students and faculty members and administrators which obviously detracted attention from academic work and also damaged the community's awareness of the heritage of Virgil Michel and the great Benedictine patterns of faith and learning.

Luther College

An arresting feature of the history of Luther College is that the most extensive changes have taken place in very recent times, from the early 1960s and on. During its first one hundred years, Luther correctly could be classified as a "defender of the faith" college, indoctrinating its students in orthodox Lutheran thought and sending them into ministerial training and teaching positions to influence society as dedicated individuals. With a new administration and an important personnel turn-over in the department of Religion in 1961, Luther became rather a "free Christian college," no less committed to its Christian and humanistic heritage but expressing it in fresh ways. Perhaps the central clue to the nature of the rather abrupt transition to what a Danforth study of church colleges had termed the "free Christian college" was the new administration's decision to support the Religion department in its espousal of historical-critical methods in the teaching of the Bible.

Within the constituency of Luther College one could no doubt find a body of opinion which would claim that the decision was a fateful one, destroying the

College's distinctive religious quality. But those close to the daily operation of Luther College are less troubled by the introduction of critical theological scholarship than by other indications that the traditional Christian and humanistic priorities of the College are suffering erosion.

During the 1960s Luther was one of several colleges which were the subjects of two separate studies carried out under the Division of Higher Education of the University of California, Berkeley. The first of these studies, done by Warren B. Martin, cited both the President and the Dean as saying that Luther's most distinctive feature was its religious nature and climate. Martin noted that the theological emphasis had changed but was not dropped; rather, it had been "extended to include contemporary issues." As the College improved the academic quality of its faculty and broadened its social and religious representation, Martin predicted, it could expect "an increased questioning" of the relevance of its religious tradition for contemporary problems.

Within a relatively short time, changes in the curriculum and in graduation requirements began to bear out the prediction. In 1969, all freshmen at Luther were required to take a correlated course in Western civilization including three hours of history, three hours of literature, and two hours of theology. All students were required to take two years of foreign language. In the early 1970s both of these requirements were dropped, although a system of distribution requirements was retained. The freshman "core" program was thinned out and the total Religion requirement was reduced from twelve to eight hours. At the same time, the College introduced occupation-oriented majors in nursing and computer science, indicating a weakening of the liberal arts orientation.

In accounting for these shifts in direction, one notes Martin's comment that the faculty was becoming more concerned about specialization: "they are much more guild-conscious than the faculty of former years." Luther College has been experiencing a change in faculty climate that can be seen at other church colleges. It is not so much that faculty members take a strong position against the place of

religion as an integrating factor in the curriculum. The prevailing mood is rather that there is no compelling desire to shape a curriculum around a solid core of Christian and humanistic studies. In the meantime, departments are fully occupied with promoting their own particular offerings. The Religion department is not as concerned about trying to increase the quantity of required work in that discipline as it is about finding the means to make Christian humanism the integrating principle in the curriculum. There is need for more inter-disciplinary opportunities for relating religion to the humanities.

St. Olaf College

As colleges of comparable type and similar historical background, Luther and St. Olaf have experienced the same kinds of problems recently as their respective endeavors to maintain a program of liberal arts in vital touch with the Christian faith have suffered a measure of diffusion. While St. Olaf College has at present a strong program in the field of religion, it shares with Luther College the conviction that a liberal arts education at a church college should not only include religion courses, but also provide connecting links between the substance of Christianity and the entire range of humanistic disciplines.

Under a Ford Foundation grant in 1955-56 a St. Olaf faculty self-study committee produced a valuable book, Integration in the Christian Liberal Arts College, edited by Howard Hong (Northfield: St. Olaf College Press, 1956), which reviewed the rich history of Christian faith and liberal learning and proposed integrative courses in Western civilization, systematic thinking, Introduction to science, humanities, political, social, and economic institutions, and senior studies. The book was favorably received at a number of institutions across the country but, ironically, the proposed courses were not instituted at St. Olaf. When a symposium of Lutheran educators published Christian Faith and the Liberal Arts (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), two of the three editors and seven of the contributors were members of the St. Olaf faculty. These two studies are mentioned here for two reasons. First, they indicate the persisting interest in the St. Olaf

faculty in the relation between faith and liberal education. Second, the fact that the carefully-prepared "integration" proposals were not put into effect indicates the sobering truth of what Sidney French wrote in the Foreword to Integration in the Christian Liberal Arts College: "So it has gone down through the ages, the forces of disintegration and fragmentation arrayed against those of integration. As knowledge has accumulated in accelerating amounts the trend toward disintegration has become more tangible, and the attempts at integration more difficult" (p. viii).

Fragmentation and specialization have become more and more evident at St. Olaf during the past twenty years, partly because departments have looked more closely at a candidate's professional competence than at his or her capacity to relate the discipline to the total humanistic dimensions of teaching and learning. A related trend during the 1960s was the drive to make the faculty more heterogeneous by adding teachers whose more cosmopolitan backgrounds often accounted for a somewhat indifferent attitude toward the distinctive mission of a church-related college. A further symptom of the weakening of humanism in a Christian perspective has been the appearance of more career-oriented courses which blur the important distinction between education and training. A recent example was the faculty's approval of a social work major which includes a considerable amount of skills in social work.

At the present time the challenge to the Christian and humanistic heritage at St. Olaf College can best be characterized by the term "diffusion." There is no overt opposition to this heritage, and there are lively spheres within the life of the College where the classical humanistic concerns continue to find vigorous expression. The Religion Department is witnessing a positive response to its courses by having many students take more than the required three courses. Students have shown an appreciative interest in two Interim lecture series featuring faculty members discussing the relation between their personal faith and values and their professional field. Christian themes continue to appear in the activities of the Art and Music Departments. Nevertheless, the energies of the students and faculty

are so diffused into so many separate and time-consuming mini-worlds that the connecting threads of meaning and purpose are badly frayed. One may well assume that the modes of integration proposed in 1956 will not work today, but some workable plan is called for to unite the College community in an awareness of the humanizing goals of liberal education. Given St. Olaf's previous leadership in these goals, the time is ripe for a strong re-affirmation of the historic relation of the Christian faith to liberal learning, and a fresh demonstration of that relation through the resources present in the community.

College of St. Catherine

Changes at the College of St. Catherine which indicate some difficulties for the maintaining of the traditional combination of religion and learning can be divided into influences coming from external events and those which are related to internal circumstances. Vatican Council II, in shaking up the Catholic world at large, has brought about repercussions which the Catholic colleges are still trying to adjust to. After Vatican II the number of recruits flowing into the order of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet has become a small trickle. Moreover, a substantial number of nuns have left the order. At St. Catherine's this has meant since Vatican II a steadily decreasing percentage of nuns among the faculty, with a subsequent loss of some of the old sense of religious commitment, alienation of older faculty, and loss of control of the College by the religious community. Inevitably, some bitterness and hostility came to the surface.

An increasing student population called for the hiring of new faculty personnel, many of whom were competent in their disciplines but lacking in commitment to the traditional orientation of the College. When curriculum modification was being urged in the mid-sixties, the younger faculty tended to support the student's right to choose at random from a wide variety of courses. There were efforts to abolish all graduation requirements, which included theology, philosophy, foreign languages, history, science, fine arts, and literature. Fortunately, those efforts failed, but in the process an interdisciplinary course designed to integrate

the humanistic disciplines with a religious core was also turned down.

In 1968 the faculty decided to adopt the 4-1-4 academic calendar. At the same time, graduation requirements were modified. A substantial set of requirements was retained: foreign languages through the intermediate level, two courses in science, four courses divided between philosophy and theology, one course in literature, one in history, one in fine arts, and one course in the social sciences. But the above scheme represents a reduction of requirements in religion, philosophy, and history.

Strong pressures for more options continue to be felt, frequently bolstered by the argument that professional groups are demanding more preparation in certain fields. The place to reduce requirements in order to make possible more options, according to some faculty voices, is in the humanities and especially in foreign languages.

A glance at the history of St. Catherine's reveals that at three points in its modern history, the College has had to make a conscious re-affirmation of its commitments to the liberal arts and the religious tradition. In the 1930s, before the Phi Beta Kappa chapter was awarded, Dean Ste Hélène Guthrie sensed that the growing demand for vocational courses called for "an increasing watchfulness in respect to scholastic aims and standards." In the 1950s, when such fields as nursing, occupational therapy, and elementary teaching were attracting many students, "a tough battle to maintain the college's liberal arts character had to be waged," writes historian Merrill Jarchow. Commenting on the situation as the decade of the 1970s opened, Jarchow notes that of 102 full-time teachers on the faculty, 40 of them were members of the sisterhood. "This ratio reflects the growing difficulty in recruiting religious for the instructional staff, a problem which poses financial challenges and a possible threat to the traditional character of the institution."⁴⁸ ~~In company with Saint John's University, Luther College, and St. Olaf College, the College of St. Catherine is on the threshold of a needed re-emphasis on the Christian, humanistic, liberal arts tradition which made it the~~

and
In company with Saint John's University, Luther College, St. Olaf College,
the College of St. Catherine is on the threshold of a needed re-emphasis on the
Christian, humanistic, liberal arts tradition which made it the outstanding
Catholic college for women which it is today.

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